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Bilingual: Life and reality. By FRANÇOIS GROSJEAN. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. 276. ISBN 9780674048874. \$25.95 (Hb).

Reviewed by BARBARA ZURER PEARSON, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Between Grosjean's first book on bilingualism, *Life with two languages* (1982), and his new book, *Bilingual: Life and reality*, the professional study of bilinguals by linguists and psychologists has grown exponentially. There are now several journals devoted to bilingualism research and a more than five-fold increase in the number of articles in general domain journals (Bialystok 2007). As Kroll states, the performance of bilinguals is now 'taken as primary evidence for the purpose of adjudicating the classic debates about representation of language in the mind and brain' (2009:i). However, while scientists have picked up on bilingualism as a unique lens with which to view general questions about language, there has not been a comparable recognition by the general public of bilingualism as a mainstream phenomenon. That is the issue that G's new book addresses.

G has himself contributed significantly to the growth of the scientific study of bilinguals as an author of five books and over 100 articles on bilingual language processing, perception, sign language, and aphasia; and as a founding coeditor of the Cambridge University Press journal *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*. This new book is directed not to his fellow psycholinguists, but to his fellow bilinguals and those who live and work with bilinguals. G wants bilinguals to be able to discuss their experiences and to find stories and descriptions where they can see themselves represented. He maintains that 'bilingual children and adolescents ... must be allowed to talk about what it means to be bilingual and bicultural' (245), so that they can get the encouragement and assistance they might need to embrace their bilingualism and be accepted for who they are. This book works on both goals: (i) to help bilinguals recognize and respect their own achievement, and (ii) to help those who are not bilingual to understand the many typical ways to be a bilingual, and to accept and respect bilinguals, too.

We learn in the introduction that the first audience for this book was G himself as a teenager. The many changes in his own language history were not always easy transitions. In Ch. 8, 'Languages across the lifespan' (85–96), G reports how he became aware of his own bilingualism and biculturalism. After his first six years in a French environment and then ten years of education in the medium of English, he asked, 'Was I English? Was I French?' Could he be both? At the time, he could find no materials to help him sort it out.

The book is both personal and general. The tone is conversational. Chapters are intentionally short so readers can pick up the book and easily begin where they left off. There are many statements from a range of bilingual individuals, from novelists to athletes. Still, twenty-two pages of notes show that G did not completely leave aside his careful scientific style.

It should be emphasized that the book is not a chronicle of G's own life and times. Although it is written in the first person, G injects his own experience and opinions only when they are relevant. More than anything, the 'reality' in the title is achieved by being named and discussed. The book differs from its 1982 predecessor in its focus. As G relates in the introduction, this book has almost none of the political or neurological discussions of the former book.

The current book has two subdivisions: 'Bilingual adults' and 'Bilingual children', with thirteen and six chapters, respectively. Adult chapters cover descriptions of bilinguals as well as the functions and processes of multiple languages in use and over time. There are three chapters on attitudes and personality. I particularly appreciated the two chapters on bilingual writers, whom

Anna Wierzbicka (2005) calls our best sources of information on the bilingual mind. G takes from academics—a university course on polyglot writers by Elizabeth Beaujour (2011)—and from historical figures like Erasmus and contemporary novelists such as the explosive Junot Diaz. One chapter singles out ‘professional bilinguals’—language teachers, translators, secret agents, and other exceptions like Cardinal Mezzofanti, diplomat Richard Francis Burton, and linguists Ken Hale and Mario Pei, who are reported to have spoken twenty to forty languages or more. Most attention, however, is devoted to everyday multilinguals such as those we might see in our workplace or among family and friends.

In the second part of the book, the chapters about children touch on the ways in which children become bilingual and document for parents and teachers that learning two languages is not harmful for children’s linguistic, cognitive, and social-emotional growth. As the many examples point out, the process can be easier or harder depending on the timing of learning the different languages as well as on the cultural supports and emotional comforts available in them. According to G, ‘[b]ecoming bilingual and bicultural should be a joyful journey’ (217), but all development means change, and change is hard at any age. G wants his readers to become the ‘caring and informed adults’ (217) whom bilingual children need to ease their passage from one stage to the next.

Ch. 19, ‘Education and bilingualism’ (229–42)—the only chapter on this topic—is careful to separate the two words into conjoined noun phrases and to avoid any controversies concerning bilingual education. G distinguishes the education of people becoming bilingual, where bilingualism is not the aim, from programs that teach the standard curriculum—whatever is mandated in a given country—but which engineer its delivery to optimize learning more than one language. Objective 6 of the 2002 UNESCO declaration sums up the enterprise: ‘Encouraging linguistic diversity—while respecting the mother tongue—at all levels of education, wherever possible, and fostering the learning of several languages from the earliest age’ (229). G concludes this chapter with my own favorite formula for educating bilinguals to be bilingual—that is, two-way immersion (Pearson 2008). In this system, all children are experts in a helping role half of the school day and are being helped by their tutees during the other half. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., G has a dream (245) that there will be a time when all young people (and the adults they become) are proud of their languages and cultures. This is a book to help build that pride.

Woven throughout the two parts of the book is an emphasis on setting the record straight. G repeatedly refutes fifteen common myths: he emphasizes that bilingualism is more common than monolingualism; two languages are not harder than one; the first language is not automatically more privileged than subsequent languages; bilinguals are not all translators; bilinguals develop biculturalism as a separate achievement; and most multilinguals do not have native command of all of their languages. As G’s source *Ethnologue* (Gordon 2005) points out, there are more languages than nationalities by several orders of magnitude, so individuals crossing language divides are inevitable. But since so many people—including influential scholars like Bloomfield (1933)—count as bilingual only people who have full command of all of their languages and speak them all without an accent, we can understand why many people think of bilingualism as rare and specialized. Such individuals are indeed relatively rare.

As G repeatedly points out, most people who are bilingual do not consider themselves bilingual. The definitional problem is well treated at the outset in Ch. 2, ‘Describing bilinguals’ (18–27). The matrix G creates by level of use on one axis and by level of proficiency on the other somewhat simplifies a complicated picture, but he adds back complexity by teasing out modalities and subskills in different domains at different stages of life. The description of G’s own language history requires matrices at five time points, even leaving off the fragmentation by domain within the broad outlines of his experiences in his four languages. In the literature, G is associated with the plea not to count bilinguals as two monolinguals joined at the neck (e.g. Grosjean 1989). Rather, he points out that ‘bilingual’ can itself be an identity, and that bilinguals often identify more with other bilinguals than with their respective monolinguals.

On the whole, this is a book of tidbits. Its goal is to make bilingualism feel familiar, not exotic. There are no new findings that have not been reported elsewhere by G or others. So, one could question why this book written for laymen would be of interest to readers of *Language*, as I

believe it will be. Just as all bilinguals are not automatically translators by virtue of being bilingual, linguists are not necessarily aware of the human side of speaking multiple languages, and they can profit from hearing about the relationship that ordinary speakers have with the languages they speak.

I remember my first Mario Pei book (1954) that I was given as a teenager. It felt more like pulp fiction than schoolwork, but it brought me to the field. Likewise, *Bilingual: Life and reality* does not promote any contemporary linguistic theory. Rather it is a readable, informative, and emotionally satisfying work. Those qualities have perhaps more weight now than in G's 1982 book. This time they come from someone who has been a strong and consistent contributor to the research underlying the book's themes on which the bridge to the nontechnical reader is built. The book is a gift. It is a good gift for multi- and monolinguals alike, and it is a gift to linguistics that helps us explain our field to nonlinguists.

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When languages die: The extinction of the world's languages and the erosion of human knowledge. By K. DAVID HARRISON. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. 304. ISBN 9780195372069. \$17.95.

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and ADAM ROTH SINGERMAN, *University of Lisbon*

A linguist dedicated to documenting languages in the field and to raising awareness of language endangerment, K. David Harrison offers in *When languages die (WLD)* an exploration of how 'traditional' or 'indigenous' (terms we introduce in quotes, recognizing their fragility) languages encode vast ecological, astronomical, topological, and mathematical information. Neither a how-to-save-languages guide nor a treatise on technical linguistic theory, this book aims to synthesize diverse academic fields through the prism of language structure and vocabulary, echoing